
UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing

Student Writings
2003
Utah Board of Juvenile Justice

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Do the Write Thing 2003 VIP Judges

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- Jim Matheson**
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- Roma Downey**
Touched by an Angel
- Neleh Dennis**
KUTV News
- Judge Andrew Valdez**
Third District Juvenile Court
- Brent and Bonnie Beesley, President,**
Guardian State Bank
- Jarron Collins**
Utah Jazz

The Utah Board of Juvenile Justice and the Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee would like to thank the following individuals for their generous support of Utah's Do the Write Thing Challenge.

- Brent and Bonnie Beesley**
*President and CEO, Guardian State Bank
Board of Directors, National Campaign to Stop Violence*
- Jeff Stringham**
Vice President, Barnes Banking Co.
- Marion Mattingly**
Executive Director, National Campaign to Stop Violence

Utah Board of Juvenile Justice Do the Write Thing Organizing Committee

- Andria Burton**
- Tonia Hashimoto**
- Jennifer Jolley**
- Holly Martak**
- Huy Nguyen**
- Gary Dalton**

UTAH'S THIRD ANNUAL CHALLENGE TO **Do the Write Thing**

The Importance of the Do the Write Thing Challenge

Do the Write Thing is not about winning a prize. It is an essential part of a long-term strategy to help students and adults better understand each other and work together to prevent youth violence.

The *Do the Write Thing* Challenge is a program of the National Campaign to Stop Violence. The program motivates students to make a personal, written commitment to resist and combat youth violence in their communities. Young people around the country are encouraged to voice their solutions for reducing the violence that destroys so many young lives. The program works because it recognizes that the best solutions come from the communities where the violence takes place.

Utah's *Do the Write Thing Challenge* is sponsored locally by the Utah Board of Juvenile Justice. The Board monitors Utah's compliance with the core requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The Board is also responsible for administering over \$1 million in federal juvenile justice funds aimed at filling gaps in the full continuum of juvenile justice services from prevention to treatment. Members are appointed to serve by Governor Leavitt.

How the Campaign Works

Information was sent to all Utah school district superintendents and middle school principals encouraging them to involve their teachers and 7th and 8th grade students in the Challenge. Teachers were given suggestions about how to tie the Challenge into coursework. Students could research youth violence as part of a history class, write a poem as part of an English class, or even consider youth violence from a social science perspective. Following a classroom discussion about youth violence, students were asked to write answers to three questions.

How has youth violence affected my life?

What are the causes of youth violence?

What can my community and I do to reduce youth violence?

School districts reported that nearly 2000 student participated in this year's Challenge with more than 1,300 submitting essays. The Board selected 14 finalists who were then forwarded to Utah's VIP Judges. The VIP judges had the difficult task of selecting a boy and girl national finalist along with runners up.

Utah's winners, Connie Howard and Wesley Stembridge, will have the opportunity to participate with other National Finalists at the Do the Write Thing National Recognition Ceremony in Washington DC this July. Finalists are scheduled to meet with members of Congress to discuss the problem of youth violence. They will also attend a reception hosted by the Ambassador to the United States for the State of Kuwait. A book containing the student's writings will be placed in the Library of Congress.

Congratulations to all students that took on the Challenge to do something about youth violence!

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing!

National Finalists

Connie Howard

7th Grade, Centennial Middle School

Teacher, Mitchell Swenson

Wesley Stenbridge

7th Grade, Provo School District FOCUS

Teacher, Cheryl Thompson

Connie Howard • 7th Grade
Centennial Middle School • Teacher, Mitchell Swenson

My Dad is a District Court Judge. Every Thursday starting at 8:00 in the morning he has his criminal calender, with over 150 cases. By the end of the day he has judged all types of criminals on all kinds of crimes. One thing he has noticed over all the years of judging is that he rarely sees an adult criminal that did not begin his crimes when he was young. The violence and criminal behavior often began when the person was a child.

Youth violence is often the beginning of a life of violence and not only does it continue into the individuals adult life but the victims (often children) learn the behavior and they in turn will adopt violent ways. The cycle continues with adults being violent to children, then children to children and in time it repeats itself. Youth violence is something that is learned, either by bad example, media, or by experience. Ways to stop youth violence begin with education and stiffer punishment for beginning offenders so that they learn while they are young that this behavior is not acceptable.

I had a friend in my sixth grade class that came to school with bruises on his arms and legs. He told me that his father would beat him. He said he couldn't tell anyone or he would hurt him even more. His Father was teaching him how to be violent and to take out his anger on other people. This happens too much. A Mom

or Dad should never be violent to their children. By their bad example their children learn to be violent. Physical abuse has been proven to pass down from one generation to another. The victim children too often become the abusive parent.

In the newspaper awhile ago, there was an article on a young boy who went into his elementary school and shot a teacher and some students. They asked him afterwards why he did it and he said he saw it done on T.V.. The violence on Television, motion pictures, and video games has had a bad influence on kids. Lots of kids are playing games with guns on the nintendo and become intense in their killing people. They don't all go out and kill real people, but some do. Too much violence can cause people to become desensitized to violent acts.

In 1982 a legitimate study from the National Institute of Mental Health showed that, "with 10 years or more research, we know that violence on television does affect the aggressive behavior of children, and adults for that matter- and there are more reasons for concern about violence on television."

(<http://www.vksu.edu/humer/kulaw.htm/>)

Elijah Huggins said that "We all hear of a violent crime involving or affecting a youth nearly every day." (<Http://www.dtwf.org/DtWf2.htm>) I have not seen much violence in my school or home, but that does not mean that it doesn't happen

I am sure that there are many children like myself who do not live in a safe environment and it is not optimistic to think that they ever will. When a child experiences violence in their life, it is something that they can never forget. They learn that the world is not a safe one and people who are supposed to love them... don't. That experience or repeated experiences of violence teaches them that it is ok and they often begin to act out the same violent behavior in school and with their friends. Rominna Villasenor said that "I know there is a day when I just have to let go of the violence that I see." People who experience violence in their young lives need to learn how to let go of the violence also but they can only do that with help.

Educating people and youth about the problems that violence causes is the greatest way to fight it. Youth need to know from school, church and other mentors that violence is never an answer to their problems. They also need to be taught that if they are victims of violence what happened to them was wrong. My father says that if a young person is caught and disciplined early in his life, there is a greater chance that he will not be persistent in his violent behavior. Parents need to be punished also for abusing their children and then the children need to be helped to see that what happened was wrong and that they can be different than their parents.

I am glad that I have not been a victim of violence, but that does not mean that others aren't. I think that children can learn not to be violent, but adults have to be a good example, the media needs to stop showing so many violent shows, and experiences of violence need to stop.

Wesley Stenbridge • 7th Grade
Provo School District FOCUS • Teacher, Cheryl Thompson



BY: Wesley Stenbridge

I think youth violence is anger kept inside and then inflicted on somebody in an emotional, sexual, physical, mental or verbal way. Violence is like a disease it spreads from one person to another. It will take over your mind but only if you let it. I've been involved with violence many times.

My dad was violent. He would get mad at anything we'd do that he didn't like. He would abuse us. He would smack us, kick us, and he would even smack my baby brother and sister without a reason. He's especially abused my younger brother and me. My mom kicked him out a number of times but she would always let him come back. It made me mad.

It made me sad to see my brothers and sister to get hit and abused. Especially when he hits my baby brother and sister. It made me even angrier when that anger starts to build up and when it's released. It was released in a violent way and that's what happened to me. I kept getting angrier and angrier. When I had enough of it I started to get into fights at school and getting suspended all the time. It got to the point when they expelled me, which made me mad.

I then started stealing. I stole candy, watches, and bikes. I got caught quite a few times and that's when the social workers stepped in.

We had a social worker come to our house and our house was messy. He gave us plenty of chances to clean the house. The next time they came the house was messy again and he took us with him.

I was sent to the detention center, and my brothers and sisters were sent to a shelter and then out to foster care.

We're all split up now and I can't see any of my siblings or my mom. My older brother ran away from the boys group home. We ended up moving back in with my dad and his sister. We all wanted to leave so after a month we left and went back into foster care. My baby brother and sister are lucky because they live in the same home. My older brother finally turned himself in and went into foster care as well. He will soon live with my uncle.

One of my younger brothers is living with my grandparents. My younger brother and sister are going to be adopted by a great family, but I'll still be in a foster home for a while. I don't know where I'll end up.

I think back to when we were a family and I get mad because my dad's violent ways split up the family. I realize now that growing up in that type of family made me think that violence was okay, and I began to take it

out on others. I had power to stop but never did. So it's not what I can do to stop violence it's what other people can do to stop it.

Some people don't mean to be violent it's just all they know because they grew up around someone violent.

So how can we stop violence? We can't stop ALL violence but we can stop most of it. If we teach other about violence, at a young age, then maybe it will catch on.

One thing we can do is stick up for what is right. We can help or talk to people that are violent.

Some people commit suicide because of violence. They feel like there is no way out of the violence so they take their own life.

Everyone can help stop violence. We can save many lives by not being violent. People would be happier without violence. I would be happy without violence. I would be living with my family but I messed up. I ended up being violent like my dad. I guess you could say I followed in his footsteps.

Now I'm living with a great foster family and my brothers and sisters are happy that none of us are getting in trouble.

Violence doesn't do any good, just bad. That's why we need to stop it. The world would be much happier without violence.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing!

Runners Up

Amanda Fujiki

8th Grade, Meridian Middle School

Teacher, Justin Kennington

Jordan McKeachnie

8th Grade, Provo School District FOCUS

Teacher, Cheryl Thompson

*Amanda Fujiki • 8th Grade
Meridian Middle School • Teacher, Justin Kennington*

Protecting Cody

On average Cody gets called “fag” twelve times a day, gets his lunch money stolen every other day, is pushed into the girls bathroom twice every week and is ‘pantsed’ during gym class once a month. My Mom sees Cody for therapy three times a week. I never asked her why he needed therapy. And at first I didn’t care.

I remember the first time I met Cody. My brother Rob and I were going to watch movies with him while our parents went out to dinner. I guess I expected Cody to look different, because I was surprised when I was introduced to a tall 15 year old boy who loved the “Blues Brothers” and jazz. But, as we talked I noticed that Cody really was different. He couldn’t tell what was serious and what was a joke. His sentences weren’t connected and he kept changing the topic. I could see why other kids had targeted him at school. He was different and he was hard to interact with. My Mom told me that the boys at school would hit Cody’s head into the lockers. She said that once one of the teachers saw Cody being tormented. The teacher had asked the “tormenters” what was going on. “Cody owes me lunch money,” one of the boys said. The teacher believed him.

We continued to watch movies with Cody. I think he began to feel more comfortable around us. Gradually he stopped picking at his eyebrows and looking at the floor when he talked. But his speech was still disfluent and he was always searching for words.

Last summer Cody's Mom signed him up for youth camp. She said she wanted him to have the experience of being with lots of people and making new friends. Unlike all of the other kids, however, Cody didn't have a roommate. As Cody's therapist, my Mom was worried that the kids at camp would treat Cody like the kids at school had. She was afraid that the usual tormenting and name calling would begin when he got there and that one week, short as it seemed, would be far too long. When Cody's mom asked if we knew anyone who could be Cody's roommate my mom instantly thought of my 15 year old brother, Rob.

"You need to protect Cody," she told him.

I had a hard time seeing how Rob was going to protect Cody. Although Rob was well liked he was not considered a 'tough guy' and had never been in a fight in his life. He was much smaller than Cody and it seemed that if any one was going to protect anyone it would be Cody protecting Rob.

I went with my parents to drop Rob and Cody off at the youth camp. They were sharing a small room with twin beds and one closet. My Mom prayed the whole week that they were gone that Cody would have a good experience. She didn't worry about Rob--we all knew he would be fine.

My Mom sighed a silent prayer of thanks when Cody and Rob came home and said they'd had a good time. I couldn't wait to get home so I could ask Rob about what had happened during the week. "What did Cody act like?" "Did the kids pick on him?" "Were the girls nice to him?"

“Yeah, the girls were nice to him and the kids didn’t pick on him,” Rob said.

“We stayed together.”

My Mom was right. Rob had protected Cody; but not with threats or fists. He had protected him with his quick smile and sense of humor. By making lots of jokes, often about himself, he diverted negative attention from Cody. He frequently did this when Cody’s lack of social awareness made him vulnerable to abuse. Rob worked hard to befriend Cody, but he was not striving for popularity. As Rob acted with kindness and humor, however, he gained the respect and friendship of many of his peers. Rob had come up with a nonviolent solution to solve part of Cody’s problem and both had benefited. As for me, I learned to see Cody in a new way. I used to think of him as an experiment, or a charity case. Now I see him through Rob’s eyes--Cody is a person. Like all of us, sometimes he needs the protection that only understanding and kindness can provide.

Jordan McKeachnie • 8th Grade

Provo School District FOCUS • Teacher, Cheryl Thompson

Violence has been a big thing in my life. While growing up my dad was physically abusive toward my mom and I for the first five years of their marriage he would hit and throw things at us when I woke him up by playing in the living room at 11:00AM. I've block most of the memories, but there are still some good and bad memories of my early childhood before my dad went to counseling. One thing I remember is hearing my dad and mom fighting and I would be hiding next to a door then my dad came out and I felt as though I was staring at a bull pawing the ground and getting ready to charge.

I think the main causes of youth violence are when a child is abused as a young child and grow up having a power struggle with classmates, brothers, sisters, parents, and cousins and using violence to do so. I think another cause of violence is when the child is neglected and the only way they get noticed by doing things that are wrong. Then the child gets into a habit of doing things wrong instead of doing good things like getting good grades to get attention.

Violence has affected my life because of my father's violence it affected me in such away that I felt that it was okay to be violent to get what I wanted. One of his acts of rage was on my 13 birthday. He had told me to get my little brother and take him to his room so they could watch a blue's clues movie. My brother kept dropping down because he didn't want to leave. My dad misconstrued the situation and got mad because he thought I was hurting my little brother, he came after me and threw me into the wall and kicked me then I called him a f@#!er then he broke his mug over my head leaving a huge goose egg on my head. Those kinds of experiences caused me to believe that to inflict fear and pain was the only way to get what I wanted from people.

Violence in my family has not only been from my dad toward my mom, or me but from me towards my brothers and sister. One time I got so mad and chose not to control my anger and ended up kicking him in the head six times giving him with a goose egg the length of his forehead and the width of a Crayola marker. On another occasion my brother and me got into a fight I got my arm around his throat making him pass out he didn't remember the fight afterward. On another occasion I got mad because I got in trouble for something I didn't do and I stormed upstairs to clean (that was my punishment) my sister came and hit me playfully and I took it the wrong way and pushed her down and kicked her after that I didn't calm down so my mom got worried and called my P.O. who told her to call the cops then they came and arrested me and took me to Slate Canyon detention center.

I can stop violence by teaching those around me as well as myself that all violence does is fill up prisons.

UTAH'S CHALLENGE TO
Do the Write Thing!

State Finalists

Marie Cote

7th Grade, Ephraim Middle School
Teacher, Shannon Sorensen

Alex Rose

8th Grade, Butler Middle School
Teacher, Jodi Ide

Hannah Gouddy

7th Grade, Payson Middle School
Teacher, Jonathon Lawrence

Skyler Salazar

8th Grade, Dixie Middle School
Teacher Nancy Endsley

Adam Mathis

7th Grade, Kanab Middle School
Teacher, Jeanine Johnson

Laura Sheffield

8th Grade, Farrer Middle School
Teacher, Jeannette King

Stephen Peterson

8th Grade, Snow Canyon Middle School
Teacher, Peggy Jardine

Abby Stout

7th Grade, West Jordan Middle School
Teacher, Miss Geilman

Jerrad Pullum

7th Grade, Syracuse Junior High
Teacher, Mrs. Bourgeois

Erika Thompson

7th Grade, Lehi Middle School
Teacher, Mrs. McEwan

Marie Cote • 7th Grade
Ephraim Middle School • Teacher, Shannon Sorensen

VIOLENCE

IN YOUR YOUTH YOU THINK VIOLENCE COULD NEVER HAPPEN TO YOU, BUT DEEP DOWN YOU KNOW IT ISN'T TRUE. VIOLENCE CAN STRIKE AT ANYONE, IN ANY WAY, AND ANY DAY, I MYSELF NEVER REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT, THEN I HEARD ALL THE ADULTS TALK ABOUT IT, THE ADULTS ALL SAY "WHY SHOULD ARE CHILDREN FEAR? WHEN VIOLENCE IS NO WERE NEAR?" BUT WHAT WOULD THEY SAY IF THE VERY NEXT DAY THEIR CHILDREN COME HOME COVERED IN BLOOD BECAUSE THEY GOT MUGGED. THERE 'S THEFT, RAPING, AND MURDERING GALORE, ISN'T ANYWHERE SAFE ANYMORE? OR IS LIVING IN FEAR THE ONLY WAY TO SEE THE LIGHT OF ANOTHER DAY? PEOPLE SAY WORDS CAN BE THE MOST HARMFUL THING. THEY CAN BE USED IN WAYS THAT CAN LEAVE A STING BUT GOOD WORDS CAN BE JUST AS BAD IF THEY ARE NOT SAID TO SOMEONE WHO IS VERY SAD. BUT WHEN YOU FINALLY THINK WHAT THOSE GOOD WORDS WOULD HAVE DONE. IT 'S TO LATE, YOUR FRIEND IS STARING DOWN THE BARREL OF A GUN, AND NOW BECAUSE OF THE WORDS THAT WERE NOT SAID YOUR FRIEND IS DEAD. VIOLENCE IS MADNESS, VIOLENCE IS INSANE, AND VIOLENCE IS AS TWISTED AS THE DESIGN ON A CANDY CANE, BUT DOES IT REALLY HAVE TO GO ON FOREVER? NO MAYBE IF WE WORKED TOGETHER, HAD A SMILE ON IN BOTH SUNNY AND RAINY WEATHER. OR JUST TALKED TO SOMEONE FOR A WHILE, JUST LONG ENOUGH TO MAKE THEM SMILE. MAYBE IF WE ALL TOOK THE TIME THERE MIGHT BE PEACE BETWEEN ALL OF MANKIND.

Hannah Goudy • 7th Grade
Payson Middle School • Teacher, Jonathon Lawrence

BENEITH THE BOMBS

By Hannah Goudy

School violence has escalated from small fights after school, to bomb threats and killing sprees. Most acts of school violence, whether big or small, are a consequence of bullying.

Most people forgive and forget, but to some the trips in the hall, or the slug on the shoulder can seriously damage them. The little flame of hurt can grow into a rushing forest fire of hate and bitterness. Soon they hate everyone and everything, and hate will fan the flame until it has destroyed all that is good.

A plot of revenge race through their mind and killing is the one that sticks. They start making bombs, or buying guns off the street. The fateful day finally comes and all of their innocent peers step into the “School of Death.”

* * * * *

When I was in fifth grade, I overheard on of my classmates threaten to blow up the school. I was scared and decided to tell my teacher. Colten (not his real name) was suspended for two days and said that he was just kidding.

Now metal detectors have been installed to try and prevent tragedies like Columbine high. Metal detectors can stop some of the problem, but certainly not all of it.

We need to go beneath the guns and bombs, and get to the center of the problem—the teasing and bullying. Bullying starts when single person points out another’s flaws. Soon more people are making fun of him. He thinks that everybody hates him. I know.

When I was ten, I was pretty much the “nerd” of my class. I had glasses, zits, and was tall and gangly. Soon everybody started calling me Big Legs. I was a lucky one, I got over it and adopted it as my nickname.

The next year hardly anybody recognized me. My glasses were gone and my face was clear. Nobody was calling me Four Eyes, or even Big Legs. *Did they want to hurt me, just because I wasn’t drop-dead gorgeous?*

We need to STOP this! It’s like the song, “STOP! In the name of love! Think it over.” If you love yourself and your fellow classmates, then think before you make fun of people. They have feelings, and your remarks might be the start of a disaster.

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” That’s a bunch of hullabaloo. Words penetrate deeper than the bone-it can penetrate the heart. Your heart is an essential part of your life. Your heart controls your emotions and will guide you to the right path.

The only solution to bullying is to put yourself in the victim’s shoes. Would you like to be ridiculed? In other word, follow The Golden Rule. I know, they teach you this in first grade, but it is the only way to put and end to school violence. Actually, it’s the only way to stop ALL violence, except maybe the suicide bombers and suicide attackers. They’re practically beyond hope. Theirs is the deepest, and most bitter hatred to anything they don’t have- they’re jealous.

The boys at Columbine didn’t see any way out, but there is. We need to stop bullying. If we stop bullying, we will decrease the acts of violence so much that kids brining guns to school will be rare and uncommon. We need to save all of the innocent victims and save the first victim, now the perpetrator.

I have tried to remind others and myself of the consequences of teasing. I’m trying to put an end to bullying!

*Adam Mathis • 7th Grade
Kanab Middle School • Teacher, Jeanine Johnson*

Violence

Brian was running an errand for his mom at the corner store, a block from his apartment. He was thirteen years old and lived in New York City. On his way home he passed by a dark alley and heard something strange. He saw these two dark shady figures but couldn't make out what was going on. He went closer and he finally saw what was happening, a woman was getting beaten to death by teen boys. Panicking, Brian darted for the street but he bumped into a cop. The cop asked, "What's the rush?"

Violence can change everyone's life, because it's everywhere! A couple years ago the Twin Towers got brought down by hijackers causing pandemonium throughout the United States. That is only one way that violence can be caused. There is war violence, too. War violence is about two different kinds of people fighting for what they think is right. But right now I'm talking about youth violence.

Youth violence is caused by kids not liking each other, fighting over a girl, or even drugs and alcohol. When you are watching TV and hear about youth violence you probably think what made the child that way. Well, usually when there is violence in a child it's from his parents. But sometimes they could just be picked on at school. Some children everyday get beaten by their parents for not doing a chore on time. That makes some kids think that since their parents are doing it, it's okay for them to be violent too.

There are many ways to make youth violence go away. When you see someone drinking or doing drugs, tell an adult you trust. Don't get scared about your reputation, your life or someone else's life can be at stake.

If you see your friend getting beaten from their parent or parents, tell them to see someone or you see someone for them. Your friend might be even too scared to go and get their parents in trouble because they love them. But beating your child doesn't mean you love them it means you don't even deserve to have a kid, or that parent needs help.

One of the only ways you can stop violence over a girl is by settling it out by having both boys go over to the girl and ask who she likes more.

Brian turned to the police officer and thought about what he was going to say. Then he made up his mind and told the cop that he was just in a hurry to go home, that it was not a big reason. The cop believed him and walked away. Then Brian felt guilty and ran back to the cop. "Help! There is a lady in an alley getting beaten!" Brian exclaimed to the cop. The cop ran to the alley, arrested the teens, and the woman lived, thanks to the help of Brian.

The only way children can stop youth violence is by telling an adult you trust, like: a teacher, police officer, firemen, principal, and most of all your parents.

Stephen Peterson • 8th Grade

Snow Canyon Middle School • Teacher, Peggy Jardine

Do the Write Thing

Youth violence is getting more common in elementary, junior high, and high schools. Sometimes, I wonder . . . How did people even get the idea of violence? Has it affected our home lives or did it just pass us by? What can I do to reduce violence or maybe even help it stop? I found the answers to these questions about the affect . . . of lives, causes of violence, and how I can help reduce these occurrences.

Youth violence has affected so many lives, homes, and even businesses. Parents believe that most violence occurs frequently at night, so they give their children curfews to possibly keep them out of trouble. Also, stores now have cameras, security, and watchful eyes. When somebody comes in with baggy clothes, gang signs, or a skateboard, stores watch them carefully and sometimes even expect them to shoplift. Schools also have dress codes to eliminate the attitude of gangs and the urge to do something immoral. Researchers say that if you wear Sunday best or uniforms, it will affect the behavior and attitude. Youth violence has affected lives nowadays, hasn't it?

Many times, we wonder where violence comes from. It couldn't just happen all of a sudden. I believe that one cause of youth violence are drugs. Since peer pressure is going around, the youth are tempted to take drugs and sometimes are forced by their friends. Some kids even want to try them because they are curious. When they take drugs, they don't think clearly and because of that, they do bad things. Sometimes the parents affect their children so much that children imitate their parents. If their mother was a battered-wife, they perhaps think that it is common to all wives and mothers. If the family was abused or beaten, the child might express his anger by beating another to make him feel better. Sometimes, depressed youth do the same thing as an abused child. Children might feel pressured by the media to act "cool" and do what the movie stars do. Smoking, abusing, shoplifting, and other are some of the ways that movie stars do in movies which affects children. These are only a few of the many triggers of youth violence.

While youth violence is just around the corner, we must try to do something to stop it or reduce danger in other people's lives. Some things I can do is to stay away from violent media and prevent the danger of myself getting involved into wrong things. Sometimes, the friends' influence is everything; what friends do, I do. So, it is important to choose friends wisely and peer pressure is the first thing that happens with friends. Also, before I try to do anything, I should think of the effect and how much trouble I might get in. I look for any possibilities which motivates me to prevent youth violence. Before somebody does some violence or other things, they usually boast about it to somebody before they actually do it. Since that happens, I take threats seriously and not joke about it. Listing all these things makes me realize that there are so many simple and challenging things I can do prevent these.

Youth violence is a major issue nowadays and I found out myself the answers to my three questions; how it affects lives, the reasons and triggers of youth violence, and ways to help reduce these events. Violence affects home life and city life by parents giving curfews, cameras everywhere, closely watched stores, and dress codes in school life. The triggers of these incidents are the parent's careless example, depression, youth taking drugs, violent media, peer pressure, and even family abuse. I decided that I can reduce youth violence by staying away from violent media and dangers, choosing my friends wisely, looking for any possible results in anything that I do, motivating myself to resist it, and by taking threats seriously. Youth violence is a very sad thing and I hope that someday it can be controlled. I will do my best to help it stop . . .

*Jerrad Pullum • 7th Grade
Syracuse Junior High • Teacher, Mrs. Bourgeois*

Violence

How has violence affected my life?

It has not yet filled my life with strife.

How may violence later affect my life?

Violence in my life could teach me to kife¹.

What are the causes of violence?

I could decide to remain in silence.

But I will answer, "What are the causes of violence."

I choose not to remain in silence.

Violence is hate,

Against man or state,

Do not take the bait,

Violence is hate.

What can I do about violence?

Again, I could remain in silence.

But what will I do about violence?

I will not remain in silence.

For then violence will be done.

Won't that be really fun?

We will all rise up and cheer as one,

For then violence will be done!

Alex Rose • 8th Grade
Butler Middle School • Teacher, Jodi Ide

Violence

There is violence everywhere
it comes from gangs as a dare
the friendless fight as others stare

They encourage blood and hate
and offer friendship as their bait
my friends are scared and I just wait

I hear stories of violence far away
I fear it will come and hope it won't stay
I know I can choose another way

But others may choose to give in
to peer pressure and be taken beyond redemption
I pray they will be forgiven of this sin

Their are role models that we idolize
beckoning our youth to their demise
it happens right before our eyes
and still we take it with surprise

We abuse our youth without relent
then they turn violent
and our communication goes silent

That's when they start to hate
and we have to help before it's too late

I try to set a good example
so that others can sample
the benefits of remaining calm
and trading a fist for an open palm

And if I change just one mind
then I know it was worth all my time

And if we all do the best we can
it will work, here's the plan

If we are nice to everyone we meet
then the violence problem will be beat

So give it a try and you will see
no violence means joy for you and me

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Dixie Middle School • Teacher Nancy Endsley*

-YOUTH VIOLENCE-

Why is youth violence increasing more and more with each new generation?

One of the biggest reasons is bad communication. Violence is how kids communicate these days. They do this by often using put downs such as "I hate you," or "your stupid," instead of "please stop," or " your bugging me." The kids I'm talking about are brought up around drugs, physical and mental abuse, and hate rather than love. So why is this a bad thing and how does it affect all of us? To express this, I am going to tell you an experience that I had not too long ago.

I rode the bus home after school every day. And every day there was a certain boy who was constantly punched, spit on, mocked, and treated badly by everyone. My heart broke for him, but I could not stand up for him. I tried my best to help him but every thing I did seemed to provoke the assailants to hurt him to a greater extent. All I could do was invite him to sit with me in the front, away from the bullies. Day by day the punching and spitting lessened, and things were starting to look better.

I continued to sit by him and, because of this, we began to grow closer until we became good friends. After awhile we slowly moved our way from the front to

the middle of the bus, and then further on back. We feared the bullying would continue, but it didn't! The bullies forgot about being mean to this particular person. They obviously forgot about the whole matter and felt that they had better things to do.

Tragically, Youth Violence has increased over the past few years, and it's not going to decrease until we start to do something about it. Some things we can do about it are: We need to be kinder and more friendly to everyone (treat others as you yourself would like to be treated), decrease the number of violent and profane "PG-13" and "R" rated movies, and/or increase the difficulty of youth obtaining alcohol, cigarettes, and any other kind of drug. These are just a few things that the world can do to decrease and eventually help eliminate all of our Youth Violence. These things are not only good for getting rid of the Youth Violence, but also in getting rid of all of the violence that is going on around us in the world. What we teach the youth now is what will carry on into the future.

Laura Sheffield • 8th Grade
Farrer Middle School • Teacher, Jeannette King

Youth Violence

As the boy listens to the rap song he has a feeling inside of him, he feels as if he could go out and punch someone. Youth violence. I believe youth violence is a definite problem in our society. It affects many people and ruins their lives. Think of the many families who have a child seriously injured or killed because of youth violence. We cannot even comprehend how many terrible things come about because of angry teenagers plagued with youth violence.

The media is the top reason for youth violence. The effect movies, music, and television have on youth is enormous. Some kids will do anything they see or hear about that is said to be “cool”. Youth violence is one of those things. Anger is another one of the top reasons youth get involved with violence. Just picture the kid being teased out behind the school, he turns away, not wanting to see the bully’s face. He feels the anger, knowing if the bully keeps going... This is when youth violence starts. Although youth violence does not always begin with media and anger. Drugs, gangs, broken homes, unemployment, poverty, peer pressure, weapons, and ignorance are more of the bases of youth violence. There are many different causes of it and a million different reasons, but one way or another youth violence exists.

I may not be affected by youth violence personally with a family member getting hurt, or depressed because of an angry kid, but it does affect my daily life. I don’t like to be by myself and I get uptight when I’m alone. Waiting for a ride after school after everyone has left is one of the hardest times. I try to avoid situations that may end up being violent, and am always careful in how I treat others. Some say they are not affected by youth violence, but everyone is at least a little bit.

Although this sounds depressing there are things we can do. Being an example to others of not participating in youth violence is one of the best things I can do. I don’t realize how many people watch me. Trying to befriend others is something that can help those who are violent. If someone has good friends and role models, they are less likely to be aggressive. As you can see this problem of youth violence is not hopeless; there are many things we can do.

Youth violence has many causes and affects millions of people, but we can make a difference and do something about it.

*Abby Stout • 7th Grade
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A World of Youth Violence

Violence is a big part of this world today. It is much worse than it was when my parents were kids. Whenever I ask my mom if I can sleep outside in a tent or a sleeping bag she says, "No." She says the world is too violent and someone would kidnap me. She won't even let me do a newspaper route because of it. My grandparents tell me stories of things they did in their childhood and I want to do them too. I know I'll never be able to do them because of how the world is. We can't even leave our doors unlocked if we'll only be gone five minutes!

I think some of the main causes for violence are friends, peers, pressure, drugs and gangs. Kids are always trying to fit in and be popular. Most of the popular kids aren't too nice, so they show violence to keep themselves up there. Other things that I think cause violence are: family life, T.V., music, movies, video games; mainly the media. If kids grow up being beaten or abused, they'll probably do the same. The media plays a big roll in violence. The media we have is constantly showing violence. This makes kids think its ok.

I have an idea of a way to prevent youth violence. We could have youth groups that talk about violence and other situations. I've come up with an example of one. The group could be called STOP. "S" could stand for "stay

cool.” Staying cool in a violent situation takes work. Kids could come up with ways to stay cool and practice them at home and other places. “T” could stand for “tolerance.” If we have tolerance for others we don’t like, it would help too. The groups could set goals to help them be tolerant to those people. “O” is for “Organize” or “Organization.” We could organize these groups to talk about these issues, but they could also do other things. They could do projects to help the community, discover things that help them with cooperation and teamwork, enjoy fun activities, and best of all, they could just become friends. Finally, “P” could stand for “play fair.” If you play fair you’re most likely not going to end up being violent. The groups could discuss this too.

We wouldn’t have to do this program, but if we had programs like this I think it would help stop youth violence.

In conclusion; in order to prevent youth violence, we can identify the problem, see what causes it, than discuss ways to stop it. I think and hope this would decrease the problem of youth violence.

Erika Thompson • 7th Grade
Lehi Middle School • Teacher, Mrs. McEwan

As I have thought about how I would define youth violence and address this subject, I spent some time asking peers and well as adults what they think youth violence is and how it effected their lives. I have come to the conclusion that I feel youth violence is any act done by a youth that inflicts harm on another person or themselves wether it be sexual, emotional/mental, physical.

In our society today, many youth are entertained by violence. What I mean by that it that we hear about it through lyrics in songs, it is shown in movies and on television, in computer games, etc. It often seems like violence is glorified and justified although this should not be so. What we as youth are so often entertained by is completely imaginary and pretend. The media seldom shows what the effects are after one becomes violent and the consequences people suffer because of others actions when they choose to become violent.

We as youth are exposed to violence in school, in our communities, neighborhoods and sometimes even in our own homes. Although I have not been exposed to much youth violence, the place I see it the most is in my school. Youth violence in school is a real concern to me and my friends because we spend most of our day there and teens can be very emotional and violent towards each other. Not all teens are emotional and violent but school can be a very violent place because of some students. It seems that some students want to entertain themselves throughout the day by picking on and hurting others.

I know of someone who didn't have a lot of friends. He was thought of by most as a nerd. He was pushed around a lot, stuffed into lockers, called names, etc. The bullies in school loved to pick on him. He was an easy target because he was small and alone most of the time.

Many students thought it was entertaining to watch during breaks between classes, lunch, etc. School had always been like this for him and as much as he wanted to change it, he felt like he couldn't so one day he decided to take his own life. I don't think the bullies realized how miserable they made his life every day when he came to school. I wonder if all this would have happened if just one of them had stood up to their peers and told them to leave him alone. I know all the rest of us had no idea how unhappy he was. I feel badly because I found out a little to late to be of any help to my friend but I decided that I can still make a difference to others.

Knowing him made a difference in my life. Now I am very careful with the things that I say to my friends as well as to strangers in the hall. I do not say things that I do not mean. I do not call others names because it may hurt their feelings and I would never want anyone to go home and feel the way my friend felt. I look for those eating alone at lunch and walking the halls alone. I go out of my way to say hello and try to make conversation with them. I am friendly to students in my classes wether they are a friend of mine or not. By doing these things, I feel better about myself because I know I am offering kindness and friendship to everyone, not just those who I am friends with.

I often see other students being picked on or being called names. It seems like that is the cool thing to do in junior high school. I don't care if I know who is saying it or who it is being said to, I have to tell them to stop it. I can no longer just walk by and ignore it anymore. Sometimes people do it to me and I just want to cry but I have learned to talk about it with my friends and other adults. I stand up for myself and others that I see it happening too. When I do this, it makes me feel good inside, knowing I am making a difference in the world and standing

up for what I believe in.

Living through these experiences has been good for me because it has made me a kinder person. I know that youth get made fun of and harassed all the time at school. It seems that is the nature of school but there are some of us who want to make a difference and who have the power to make someone else's day brighter just because we are in it. I can not change everyone but I can change me. I can help my community and make it a better place to live. There are enough bullies in the world. What we all need to do is focus on being peacemakers and creating happiness for others and not allow ourselves to use any part of violence as our entertainment or for the entertainment of others because it always comes at another's expense.

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